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**FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY**

**Before the
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
Washington, D.C. 20554**

**In the Matter of
Truth-in-Billing
and
Billing Format**

CC Docket No. 98-170

REPLY COMMENTS OF AMERICATEL CORPORATION

I. INTRODUCTION

On November 13, 1998, Americatel Corporation ("Americatel"), by and through its undersigned counsel, submitted comments in response to the September 17, 1998 Notice of Proposed Rulemaking in CC Docket No. 98-170, In the Matter of Truth-in-Billing and Billing Format, *Notice of Proposed Rulemaking*, CC Docket No. 98-170, FCC 98-232 (rel. Sept. 17, 1998) (hereinafter "Truth-in-Billing" or "NPRM"). In those comments, Americatel brought to the attention of the Commission a situation that it believes implicates all of the general principles set forth in the NPRM . . . principles that, in the Commission's view, should be applied to achieve its goal of "provid[ing] consumers with the information they need to make informed choices in [a] competitive telecommunications marketplace." NPRM, ¶ 1, at 2.

Specifically, Americatelel outlined in its Comments how two local exchange carriers ("LECs"), Ameritech Corporation ("Ameritech") and US WEST, Inc. ("US WEST"), have continuously refused repeated requests by Americatelel and OAN Services, Inc. ("OAN"), Americatelel's billing agent, to print Americatelel's duly registered "Doing Business As" name ("DBA"), "1010-123 Americatelel," rather than just "Americatelel Corporation," on the telephone bills of its customers. As Americatelel stated in its original Comments, the majority of LECs

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acceded to Americatel's request without opposition. Ameritech and US WEST, however, have been intransigent, despite the fact that their refusal has resulted in a good deal of customer confusion and, in some instances, complaints to local regulatory authorities by users of dial-around (and other) services, as discussed in detail in Americatel's earlier Comments. For the reasons appearing below, Americatel urges the Commission to address this issue.

II. ARGUMENT

Neither Ameritech nor US WEST has made any attempt to conceal the reason for their steadfast refusal to grant Americatel's simple request. In a recent response to a letter from Americatel's counsel,¹ for example, Ameritech unabashedly stated:

Ameritech is concerned that permitting Americatel, or any other carrier for which Ameritech performs billing services, to display its dial-around number on the Ameritech bill promotes the further use of those services, to the competitive detriment of Ameritech. The name "1010-123, Americatel," on the bill page encourages customers to further use Americatel's service, possibly in lieu of Ameritech's own intraLATA toll offerings. (See December 4, 1998 letter from Bruce D. Becker, General Counsel, Long Distance Industry Services, Ameritech, to Judith L. Harris, Reed Smith Shaw & McClay, LLP, counsel to Americatel, attached hereto as Exhibit B).

Even leaving aside the absurdity of worrying about encouraging the use of a service which the particular customers at issue are obviously already using (or they would not be being billed), the flagrant nature and tone of the quoted statement is alarming, coming as it does from a company which has repeatedly represented to whomever will listen that it will treat its future competitors fairly in those markets where it currently has a monopoly, if it is allowed to compete in the market for long distance services.

¹ Letter dated November 20, 1998, from Judith L. Harris, Reed Smith Shaw & McClay, LLP, counsel to Americatel, to Lynn Starr, Executive Director, Regulatory Affairs, Ameritech Corporation. A similar letter, sent somewhat later, to US WEST, has yet even to be answered. Both letters are attached hereto as Exhibit A.

While alternatives to using the LECs for billing do theoretically exist in the marketplace, the preference of most residential customers for a single telephone bill, the costs involved in, for example, direct billing, and the lack of billing information available to small, specialized carriers, make any alternatives impractical, thus leaving Americatel, and other companies like it, at the currently unconstrained mercy of the LECs.

Indeed, Americatel agrees, and associates itself, with the comments of Pilgrim Telephone, Inc. ("Pilgrim") filed on November 13, 1998, in the Truth-in-Billing Docket ("Pilgrim's Comments") to the effect that, for casual calling services (such as Americatel's dial-around service), "LEC billing is as much an essential facility as LEC dial tone and access service" (Pilgrim's Comments, at 9). In support of its position, Pilgrim stated that:

The FCC need look no further than its own historical pronouncements and carrier press releases to see that there is no alternative to LEC billing for casual calling services. In January of 1986, almost thirteen (13) years ago, the FCC found that with respect to LEC billing, "[t]he record clearly indicates that significant competition exists and will continue to develop. The FCC's erroneous finding was based upon its understanding that AT&T would be completely self-reliant for billing and collection "soon." The FCC concluded that there were no "barriers to entry in the billing and collection market" and that detariffing of billing and collection would enhance competition for these services.

The FCC's determination was naïve, and has been roundly disproven. No feasible alternative to LEC billing has been developed, by AT&T or any other party. The LEC bill is a bottleneck monopoly essential facility that cannot be replicated. The LECs refuse to provide 100% reliable real time BNA, which makes billing telephone purchases on other than the LEC bill impossible. AT&T has spent millions of dollars on building a casual access billing factory, with no success. AT&T has admitted its inability to create such a system more than a decade after the FCC's release of its order. The fact is that there is no alternative to LEC billing; therefore, the FCC must focus its efforts on creating uniform non-discriminatory guidelines for LEC billing. (*Id.*, at 9-10, emphasis added; interior citations omitted).

This same position was espoused in comments filed on December 4, 1998, by Nevadacom, Inc. ("Nevadacom"), in the Matter of MCI Telecommunications Corporation,

Petition for Rulemaking Regarding Billing and Collection Services Provided By Local Exchange Carriers for Nonsubscribed Interexchange Services, RM-9108 (hereinafter, "Nevadacom Comments"). In its Comments in support of MCI's petition requesting the Commission to initiate a proceeding promulgating rules to govern LEC's billing and collection ("B&C") services, Nevadacom too argued that: "LEC billing is crucial to the survival of service providers such as Nevadacom which do not have a cost-effective alternative to LEC billing" (Nevadacom Comments, at 1); "Feasible and cost-effective alternatives to LEC billing do not exist in the present marketplace" (Id., at 5).

In its Comments, Nevadacom asked that the Commission consider retariffing LEC B&C services pursuant to Title II in order to ensure that such services would be available pursuant to the anti-discrimination provisions of the Communications Act. As it explained:

Because of high set-up fees and monthly minimum charges, direct relationships with LECs for billing are reserved for only the largest carriers. Retariffing LEC B&C services [would] ensure that such services [were] available to all service providers regardless of their size. (Id., at 2).

Nevadacom, like Pilgrim, cites several reasons why small carriers have no practical alternative to LEC billing. Among those reasons are that many customers of small companies have phones, but not credit cards, thus making credit card billing impossible (Id., at 3); and that direct billing results in a much smaller percentage of customers paying their bills than when those customers are billed for the same services by a LEC (Id., n.2, at 3; see also, id., at 5).

Americatel strongly concurs in the foregoing comments by Pilgrim, Nevadacom and probably other small carriers for which LEC billing services are, for all practical purposes, their only lifeline. Ameritech and US WEST currently charge for, and profit from, their billing services. They should not be allowed to exploit for blatantly anticompetitive purposes the advantages they inherently have over other billing services (and methods) as a result of their position as a monopoly provider of local residential phone service.

Currently, these two companies are being allowed to profit from their anticompetitive practices, both directly (from the fees they charge for billing) and indirectly, by

impeding the development of competition in markets that both Ameritech and US WEST have made clear they look forward to entering. To permit their profit motive to prevail, especially at the expense of consumers having all the information they need to understand what services they are being charged for in the ever-changing, sometimes baffling market in which they must endeavor to make informed intelligent choices, is to thwart the very essence of the Telecommunications Act of 1996.

Both Ameritech and US WEST have filed comments of their own in the Commission's Truth-in-Billing NPRM. US WEST, in its Comments, began by stating that: "[n]o reputable business can be against the ideas associated with 'truth-in-billing' anymore than comparable ideas reflected in other 'truth-in-xxx' initiatives, such as truth-in-lending or truth-in-advertising." (Comments of US WEST, dated November 13, 1998, at 1; hereinafter, "US WEST's Comments"). US WEST went on, shortly thereafter, to state:

Indeed, an integral component in the maintenance of a durable commercial relationship is often found in the ability to accommodate idiosyncratic customer needs not only with respect to fundamental service offerings but the billing for such services, as well.

US WEST Communications, Inc. ("US WEST") prides ourselves on our ability to make such accommodations. (*Id.*, at 1-2).

While US WEST might have been referring to its local service customers in these statements, Americatel, through OAN, is also a US WEST customer, with legitimate needs that should be accommodated in the best interest of all concerned and, especially, in the best interest of the ultimate consumer.

In its Comments, US WEST also argued that:

Because the communication of billing information is imbued with both constitutional and competitive significance, the Commission should not enact detailed formatting or bill presentation rules . . . US WEST questions the need for any formal rules in this area at all. We believe that industry self-regulatory initiatives, as well as enforcement on an ad hoc basis through complaints and Commission-initiated

enforcement proceedings, are the more appropriate avenues to pursue. (Id., at 4.)

Indeed, US WEST went on to argue:

It is US WEST'S ability to edit its bill copy that allows us to require changes in service descriptions, carrier identifications, and other text that we believe has the potential or has proven to be confusing. Nothing should interfere with this editorial discretion and its flexible exercise. Id., at 6 (emphasis added).

In spite of these grandiose statements of principle, US WEST, in practice, has refused, without any legitimate grounds, Ameritech's simple request to be billed in its registered "DBA" name, so as to eliminate demonstrated consumer confusion (see generally, US WEST'S Comments, notes 11 and 12, at 8, regarding confusion surrounding the identity of service providers).

Ironically, in support of its position that the Commission should not dictate the use of common terminology and bill formats, US WEST argued that "the bill itself will increasingly become a part of the weaponry in the competitive arsenal of the service providers." Comments, at 17. One assumes that what US WEST meant by this statement was that a customer-friendly bill could be used in a pro-competitive fashion. In reality, however, US WEST appears intent on using the weaponry in its arsenal to impede competition and to deny its customers basic information that they could use to make informed choices in a fully competitive marketplace.

Ameritech's November 13, 1998, Comments filed in response to the Truth-in-Billing NPRM are similarly illuminating. In its Comments, Ameritech urged that the Commission develop general guidelines only and trust to industry self-regulation the job of fleshing out the details:

Ameritech fully supports development of 'truth-in-billing' guidelines that improve ease of use and customer understanding of telephone bills. However, new federal billing regulations are neither necessary nor appropriate to achieve these results. Rather, the industry can implement them itself." (Comments, at 1, emphasis in original; see also, id., at 5).

Americatel's simple request presents a good issue by which to test "industry" resolve in this regard and measure the veracity and good faith of statements such as this:

Ameritech agrees that telephone bills should be 'user-friendly' so customers can understand the services being provided and the charges assessed therefore [sic], and to identify the entities providing those services." (*Id.*, at 1, quoting NPRM, ¶ 1, emphasis added).

In the conclusion to Ameritech's Comments, Ameritech proposed general billing guidelines of its own creation for consideration by the Commission. Among the proposed guidelines, Ameritech suggested that "[b]ills should identify each entity appearing in the bill" (Proposed Guideline #4, Ameritech Comments, at 19) and "[b]ills should advise customers of the carrier responsible for each service and provide its customer service contact number" (Proposed Guideline #9, *Id.*, at 20). We believe that by granting Americatel's request to be billed in the name by which it is known in the minds of its dial-around customers, Ameritech will be voluntarily implementing its own proposed guidelines and demonstrating by its deeds, which always speak louder than words, that: "the Commission should not impose additional requirements micromanaging how [these "truth-in-billing"] objectives are met." (Ameritech's Comments, at 5.)

III. CONCLUSION

Americatel respectfully submits that when one balances the possible harm to US WEST's and Ameritech's present and/or future competitive position against the confusion that is currently being generated in this ever-changing, highly volatile marketplace by their steadfast refusal to bill Americatel (and possibly other companies) in the duly-registered name by which it is commonly known by its customers . . . the name it uses in its advertising, on all its literature and in its logo . . . the scales are heavily tipped in favor of Americatel . . . and the American consumer. Information, as everyone knows, is power. Consumers should be empowered by clear and conspicuous disclosures on their phone bills to promote the Commission's twin-and

interrelated-goals of fostering competition and helping to provide consumers with the information they need to make informed choices.

Respectfully Submitted,

AMERICATEL CORPORATION

By: Judith L. Harris
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December 16, 1998

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that a copy of the **REPLY COMMENTS OF AMERICATEL CORPORATION** has been forwarded by first class mail, postage pre-paid, this 16th day of December, 1998, to the following:

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November 20, 1998

BY FAX & U.S. MAIL

Lynn Starr
Executive Director, Regulatory Affairs
Ameritech Corporation
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Suite 1020
Washington, D.C. 20005

Re: Americatel's Request to Use "DBA" Name on Bills

Dear Lynn:

I am writing to you in my capacity as outside counsel to Americatel Corporation ("Americatel"). As you know, you and I have had several conversations over the course of the past month regarding Americatel's request to have its "doing business as" ("DBA") name, i.e. "1010-123, Americatel," appear on the telephone bills of Ameritech customers who use Americatel's dial-around service. To date, Ameritech has refused to honor Americatel's request. We ask you now to reconsider that position, especially in light of Ameritech's recent filing in the Federal Communications Commission's ("FCC's" or "Commission's") "Truth-in-Billing" rulemaking.

You are aware from information that we have shared with you and with your agents that Ameritech's intransigent position regarding this matter has resulted in a great deal of confusion among residential telephone customers and, in some instances, has generated formal complaints by users of dial-around (and other) services, only some of whom are customers of Americatel. For example, there have been a number of telephone consumers who, in placing dial-around calls from their home phones, have confused Americatel's carrier access code ("CAC"), i.e., "1010-123," with that of another dial-around company (often with MCI's much-advertised "1010-321" number), when placing their long distance calls. When their bills arrive, these customers see only "Americatel" and, not recognizing the name, think they might have been a victim of slamming and file complaints. Were these customers to see "1010-123 Americatel" on their bill instead, they (or at a minimum, the entity to which they complain) would immediately understand that perhaps the charge was incurred as a result of the customer transposing numbers when dialing, rather than as a result of unlawful slamming.

Another problem that has arisen is that Americatel's corporate name is sometimes confused with similar names of other service providers. On occasion, a customer upset with the other provider (let us say a "900" service) has ended up filing a complaint against Americatel instead. This too has caused confusion and unnecessarily consumed administrative resources to straighten out. If Americatel's "DBA" name were on customers' bills, thus making Americatel's

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Lynn Starr
November 20, 1998
Page 2

unique access code readily visible, Americatele's charges for dial-around long distance service could easily be distinguished from other companies' charges for different services.

We believe that the elimination of such confusion is one of the main goals of the FCC's pending "Truth-in-Billing" rulemaking. See In the Matter of Truth-in-Billing, *Notice of Proposed Rulemaking*, CC Docket No. 98-170, FCC 98-232 (rel. Sept. 17, 1998) ("NPRM"). In its *Notice*, the Commission set forth its view that residential telephone bills should: (1) be clearly organized and highlight any new charges or changes to consumers' services; (2) contain full and non-misleading descriptions of all charges and clear identification of the service provider responsible for each charge; and (3) contain clear and conspicuous disclosure of any information consumers need to make inquiries about charges. We believe that Ameritech's tenacious refusal to accommodate Americatele's request not only implicates all three of these principles, but could well be motivated solely by a desire to impede the development of competition for telephone services in violation of one of the primary goals of the Telecommunications Act of 1996, (See NPRM, ¶ 1, at 1: "One of the primary goals of the Telecommunications Act of 1996 . . . is to make available to consumers new services and technologies by promoting the development of competition in all aspects of telecommunications services.")

In Ameritech's November 13, 1998, comments filed in response to the NPRM in CC Docket No. 98-170, Ameritech urges that the Commission develop general guidelines only and trust to industry self-regulation the job of fleshing out the details. (See, e.g., Comments, at 1: "Ameritech fully supports development of 'truth-in-billing' guidelines that improve ease of use and customer understanding of telephone bills. However, new federal billing regulations are neither necessary nor appropriate to achieve these results. Rather, the industry can implement them itself." Comments, at 1; see also *Id.*, at 5). Americatele's simple request presents a good issue by which to test "industry" resolve in this regard and to test the veracity and good faith of statements such as this: "Ameritech agrees that telephone bills should be 'user-friendly' so customers can understand the services being provided and the charges assessed therefore [sic], and to identify the entities providing those services." (*Id.*, at 1, quoting NPRM, ¶ 1, emphasis added).

We have noted with optimism one statement in Ameritech's comments regarding the new billing format for wireline residential bills that Ameritech is apparently in the process of developing:

Ameritech will organize its new bill by billing entity (such as a [sic] interexchange carrier or a sub-CIC) with each such billing entity having its own separate page. The separate detail pages for the different billing entities will have that company's logo and contact numbers on them. (Comments, at 13, emphasis added.)

In that Americatele's logo contains its "DBA" this might well resolve the problem.

In the conclusion to Ameritech's comments in the "Truth-in-Billing" docket, Ameritech proposes general billing guidelines of its own creation for consideration by the

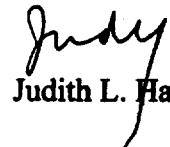
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Lynn Starr
November 20, 1998
Page 3

Commission. Among the proposed guidelines, Ameritech suggests that "[b]ills should identify each entity appearing in the bill" (Proposed Guideline #4, Comments, at 19) and "[b]ills should advise customers of the carrier responsible for each service and provide its customer service contact number" (Proposed Guideline #9, Id., at 20). We believe that by granting Americatel's request to be billed in the name by which it is known in the minds of its dial-around customers, Ameritech will be voluntarily implementing its own proposed guidelines and demonstrating by its deeds, which always speak louder than words, that: "the Commission should not impose additional requirements micromanaging how [these "truth-in-billing"] objectives are met." (Comments, at 5.)

In that reply comments are due in CC Docket No. 98-170 on or before November 30, 1998, we would appreciate hearing by close of business Tuesday, November 24, 1998, whether you are willing to reconsider your denial of Americatel's request.

Best personal regards,


Judith L. Harris

JLH/lam

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November 25, 1998

BY FAX & U.S. MAIL

Kathleen Abernathy, Esq.
Vice President, Regulatory Affairs
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1020 Nineteenth Street, N.W.
Suite 700
Washington, D.C. 20036

Re: Americatel's Request to Use "DBA" Name on Bills

Dear Kathleen:

I am writing to you in my capacity as outside counsel to Americatel Corporation ("Americatel"). As you know, you and I have had several conversations over the course of the past month regarding Americatel's request to have its "doing business as" ("DBA") name, i.e. "1010-123 Americatel," appear on the telephone bills of US WEST customers who use Americatel's dial-around service. While US WEST has indicated that it has the capability to print Americatel's DBA on its customers' bills, it has stated that it is unwilling to do so for more than a six-month period, after which US WEST would revert to its practice of printing Americatel's corporate name on its bills. In our view, this rather strange proposal would cause even more customer confusion, rather than ameliorate the confusion that already exists and seems to be motivated purely by anticompetitive considerations. We ask you now to reconsider your position, especially in light of US WEST'S recent filing in the Federal Communications Commission ("FCC's" or "Commission's") "Truth-in-Billing" rulemaking.

You are aware from information that we have shared with you that US WEST'S intransigent position regarding this matter has resulted in a great deal of confusion among residential telephone customers and, in some instances, has generated formal complaints by users of dial-around (and other) services, only some of whom are customers of Americatel. For example, there have been a number of telephone consumers who, in placing dial-around calls from their home phones, have confused Americatel's carrier access code ("CAC"), i.e., "1010-123," with that of another dial-around company (often with MCI's much-advertised "1010-321" number), when placing their long distance calls. When their bills arrive, these customers see only "Americatel" and, not recognizing the name, think they might have been a victim of slamming and file complaints. Were these customers to see "1010-123 Americatel" on their bill instead, they (or at a minimum, the entity to which they complain) would immediately understand that perhaps the charge was incurred as a result of the customer transposing numbers when dialing, rather than as a result of unlawful slamming.

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Kathleen Abernathy, Esq.

November 25, 1998

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Another problem that has arisen is that Americatel's corporate name is sometimes confused with similar names of other service providers. On occasion, a customer upset with the other provider (let us say a "900" service) has ended up filing a complaint against Americatel instead. This too has caused confusion and unnecessarily consumed administrative resources to straighten out. If Americatel's "DBA" name were on customers' bills, thus making Americatel's unique access code readily visible, Americatel's charges for dial-around long distance service could easily be distinguished from other companies' charges for different services.

The elimination of such confusion is one of the main goals of the FCC's pending "Truth-in-Billing" rulemaking. See In the Matter of Truth-in-Billing, *Notice of Proposed Rulemaking*, CC Docket No. 98-170, FCC 98-232 (rel. Sept. 17, 1998) ("NPRM"). In its *Notice*, the Commission set forth its view that residential telephone bills should: (1) be clearly organized and highlight any new charges or changes to consumers' services; (2) contain full and non-misleading descriptions of all charges and clear identification of the service provider responsible for each charge; and (3) contain clear and conspicuous disclosure of any information consumers need to make inquiries about charges. We believe that US WEST'S tenacious refusal to accommodate Americatel's request not only implicates all three of these principles, but is motivated solely by a desire to impede the development of competition for telephone services in violation of one of the primary goals of the Telecommunications Act of 1996 (See NPRM, ¶ 1, at 1: "One of the primary goals of the Telecommunications Act of 1996 . . . is to make available to consumers new services and technologies by promoting the development of competition in all aspects of telecommunications services.")

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Kathleen Abernathy, Esq.
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In that reply comments are due in CC Docket No. 98-170 on or before November 30, 1998, we would appreciate hearing from you just as soon as possible regarding whether you are willing to reconsider your denial of Americatel's request.

Best personal regards,


Judith L. Harris

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General Counsel

VIA OVERNIGHT DELIVERY

December 4, 1998

Ms. Judith L. Harris
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1301 K Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20005-3317

Dear Judy:

This responds to your letter of November 20 addressed to Lynn Starr.

You have requested, on behalf of your client Americatel Corporation, that Ameritech permit Americatel to have the name "1010-123, Americatel" appear on the telephone bills of Ameritech customers who use Americatel's dial-around service.

Ameritech is concerned that permitting Americatel, or any other carrier for which Ameritech performs billing services, to display its dial-around number on the Ameritech bill promotes the further use of those services, to the competitive detriment of Ameritech. The name "1010-123, Americatel" on the bill page encourages customers to further use Americatel's service, possibly in lieu of Ameritech's own intraLATA toll offerings.

We are not unsympathetic to the concerns expressed in your letter. There may be confusion involving Americatel's name or various carrier access codes, but such confusion, to the degree it exists, does not outweigh Ameritech's legitimate desire to prevent its bill from being used as a promotional device for carriers that compete with Ameritech. Ameritech offers billing services for the convenience of interexchange carriers that believe the Ameritech bill represents an effective means for billing and then collecting amounts due; we are not aware of any statute, regulatory requirement or contractual obligation that compels Ameritech to permit its billing customers to use the Ameritech bill for promotional purposes. Protecting the Ameritech bill from third party promotional use does not "[impede] the development of competition for telephone services," and thus does not contravene the Telecommunications Act of 1996. Although the name that Americatel desires to place on the Ameritech bill may reduce customer confusion, it has promotional consequences as well.

Moreover, there presumably are steps that Americatel can take on its own to reduce any customer confusion that may exist. I infer from your letter that Americatel may be marketing its service simply through promotion of the access code, without inclusion of the Americatel name.

Ms. Judith L. Harris
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The problems you describe perhaps could be reduced by greater promotion of the Americatel name in conjunction with the 1010-123 access code. Customers would recognize the name Americatel in their bills, with or without inclusion of the access code.

Nothing in Ameritech's comments in the FCC's Truth-in-Billing proceeding suggest a position different than that expressed in this letter. While we have gone on record in favor of concise and understandable bills, we have never stated or implied that the Ameritech bill may be used to our own competitive detriment.

Your letter quotes the statement in Ameritech's Truth-in-Billing comments that:

The separate bill pages for the different billing entities
will have that company's logo and contact numbers on them.

As our comments make clear, the billing entity may not be the actual provider; rather, the billing entity may be an aggregator, as is the case for Americatel's billing. Americatel's billed charges appear on the bill pages of OAN and OANPlus, and it is their logos that are permitted to appear on the bill page. The logos of the providers being billed through the aggregator, the so-called subCICs, do not appear on the bill pages.

Our unwillingness to allow Americatel to place the name "1010-123, Americatel" in the Ameritech bill also is not inconsistent with the guidelines that Ameritech proposes in its Truth-in-Billing comments. Inclusion of the name "Americatel," without the carrier access code, does identify the service provider, and the bill page does include a contact number for customer inquiries regarding Americatel service (the aggregator's number, apparently).

I would be curious to see the customer complaints to which you refer in the second and third paragraphs of your letter. Please provide the complaints that you describe, and perhaps our companies can work together to develop alternative means of reducing the apparent consumer confusion. Ameritech will protect the confidentiality of the customer complaints, not disclosing them further without Americatel's prior authorization.

Very truly yours,



Bruce D. Becker

BDB/mf

cc: Lynn S. Starr (via facsimile)